



*Christina Bruce and Her Defence  
of Kildrummy Castle*

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## Christina Bruce and Her Defence of Kildrummy Castle

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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

**Abstract:** In 1335, Christina Bruce “maid stout and manly resists” against a Disinherited force besieging Kildrummy Castle during the Second War of Scottish Independence. Her successful defence led to the critical battle of Culblean at which the Bruce faction scored a notable victory. The actions of her contemporaries Black Agnes and Lady Seton have received a deal of scholarly attention, but Christina has remained curiously understudied. Most chroniclers neglected to mention her and minimised her achievement, except for Andrew Wyntoun, who provided the principal and most reliable evidence for her active formulation of the castle’s defence strategy. This article outlines the development of Christina’s story from her own lifetime to the sixteenth century, considering the sources used by different chroniclers. As a member of the aristocratic class, her role as military leader sat alongside her roles as political prisoner, landholder and granter of land, trade negotiator, and royal host. Yet, she was prevented from crossing into established history and national memory by a combination of factors that included the lack of importance attached to female actions. By offering a new perspective on Christina, this article injects a degree of gender balance into the history of the Wars of Scottish Independence.

**Keywords:** Wars of Scottish Independence; Bruce; women’s history; military history; chronicles

**I**ncreasingly, scholarship recognises medieval women’s engagement with, and participation in, war, moving on from the idea that they were limited to acting as passive bystanders in their roles as mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives affected by male actions and loss.<sup>1</sup> In a European context, Megan McLaughlin defined a woman warrior as “someone who participated personally in a military action ... when a woman is said to have been present on the battlefield, to have worn armour or to have carried herself bravely.” While McLaughlin discounts “women who merely took part in the planning of a battle or campaign,” such strategising was an integral part of warfare and fundamental to the success of physical engagements.<sup>2</sup> Although women did not necessarily possess the same physical strength as men, the tactical decisions and commanding position of individuals—

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<sup>1</sup> As suggested by: Paulette l’Hermite-Leclercq, “The Feudal Order,” in *A History of Women in the West*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992-1994), 2:234–236. My thanks to Dr Iain MacInnes for looking over an earlier version of this article, and for the reviewers’ helpful comments. Any remaining errors are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Megan McLaughlin, “The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe,” *Women’s Studies* 17 (1990): 196.

including Empress Matilda—show how great an impact women could have on the development of medieval warfare and high politics.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, they sometimes utilised their own troops and financial resources to do so.<sup>4</sup> This article seeks to re-examine the role of women in medieval warfare through consideration of one woman in particular: Christina or Christian Bruce, sister of Robert I of Scotland. It will argue that her formulation of the defence strategy for Kildrummy Castle in 1335 was vital to the Bruce faction's gaining of the upper hand in military engagements with pro-Balliol forces, and that, although her contribution has been largely ignored by both medieval and current historians, the details were reliably illuminated by chronicler Andrew Wyntoun.

Christina successfully defended Kildrummy against a Disinherited force. The Disinherited had forfeited their lands and titles to Robert I in 1314 when he re-allocated them to his loyal supporters. She had gained possession of Kildrummy by September of 1335, by which time her husband Sir Andrew Murray of Bothwell was guardian of Scotland. She was besieged by David Strathbogie, claimant to the earldom of Atholl, whom she repelled until the critical battle of Culblean at which Murray defeated Strathbogie and the latter was killed, turning the war in favour of the Bruce faction.<sup>5</sup> The most extensive and informative source material for Christina's achievement is Wyntoun's early-fifteenth-century poem, the *Original Chronicle*. Other Scottish chroniclers, however, largely neglected to mention her at all. This disregard has continued through to the work of current historians who, relying on the partial accounts of most of their medieval predecessors, have left Christina out of the narrative of the reversal of Bruce fortunes in 1335-1336.

There are some exceptions. Ranald Nicholson stated in 1965 that, "to Strathbogie's activities in the north there remained one major obstacle: ... Lady Christian Bruce," though he did not mention her again in connection with the siege or the battle.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Cynthia Neville's entry in the *New Bibliographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* recounts a "long, eventful life" during which Christina "experienced first-hand Edward I's fierce determination to crush her brother, Robert I," and how she held Kildrummy against an English force during the Second War of Independence. Neville rightly calls Christina a "Scottish resistance leader."<sup>7</sup> Fiona Watson in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* digs deeper into the significance of Christina's defence of Kildrummy, which "enabled her husband to confront Atholl at Culblean and defeat him."<sup>8</sup> This victory put the Bruce faction at a notable advantage, and in the

<sup>3</sup> J.F. Verbruggen, "Women in Medieval Armies," *The Journal of Medieval Military History* 4 (2006): 124–130.

<sup>4</sup> Jean A. Truax, "Anglo-Norman Women at War: Valiant Soldiers, Prudent Strategists or Charismatic Leaders?," in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History*, ed. Donald J. Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), 112–113.

<sup>5</sup> See: W. Douglas Simpson, "The Campaign and Battle of Culblean," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 64 (1929-1930): 201–211; Iain A. MacInnes, *Scotland's Second War of Independence, 1332-1357* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), 24, 107; Michael Penman, *David II, 1329-71* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2004), 61–62; Ranald Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots: The Formative Years of a Military Career, 1327-1335* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 232–235; and Peter Marren, *Grampian Battlefields* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1998), 80–84.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, 230.

<sup>7</sup> Cynthia Neville, "Bruce, Christian," in *The New Bibliographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan, Rose Pipes, Jane Rendall, and Siân Reynolds (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 55–56. Neville dates the siege to 1333.

<sup>8</sup> Fiona Watson, "Bruce, Christian (d. 1356)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter ODNB], doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/60019.

immediate years following, Murray “ended the possibility of Edward III establishing stable lordship over southern Scotland.”<sup>9</sup> However, there remains considerable scope for Christina’s life and her role in this campaign to be more fully illuminated, and for a critical analysis of the development of her story through the late medieval period.

## Women in the Wars of Independence

David II, who was Christina’s nephew, succeeded to the throne at the age of five in 1329. His minority and, from 1334, his absence in France necessitated guardianship of Scotland by a series of nobles. From 1332, those who had been disinherited of their lands and titles in 1314 saw an opportunity to regain what they had lost. The Disinherited were led by Edward Balliol, son of John and claimant to the Scottish throne, and were supported by Edward III of England. They heavily defeated the Bruce faction at Dupplin Moor in 1332, removing Donald, 8th Earl of Mar as guardian. Christina’s husband Murray filled the role until his own capture, after which he was imprisoned for two years. Further obstacles followed for the Bruce faction—namely, another defeat at Halidon Hill in 1333 and Balliol’s cession of Scotland south of the Forth to Edward III in 1334. Without effective Bruce leadership, there was little prospect of success for supporters of David II.<sup>10</sup> This sets the scene for the siege of Kildrummy and the Battle of Culblean at which the Bruces gained the upper hand in the war, thanks in part to the actions of Christina.

A sizeable proportion of those women active in the Wars of Independence of which we know any significant detail were of extremely high status, including queens and other titled women. Isabella Macduff, Countess of Buchan, was hereditary representative of the Earldom of Fife, and enthroned Robert Bruce at his inauguration at Scone in 1306. She was captured in 1306, and Edward I punished her by imprisoning her in a wooden cage at Berwick for four years.<sup>11</sup> Robert’s sister Mary was also imprisoned in a cage, at Roxburgh, while his wife

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Brown, *The Wars of Scotland, 1214-1371* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 241.

<sup>10</sup> MacInnes, *Scotland’s Second War of Independence*, 11–13, 15–17; Brown, *The Wars of Scotland*, 232; Penman, *David II*, 47–48, 50–52; Sonja Cameron and Alasdair Ross, “The Treaty of Edinburgh and the Disinherited (1328-1332),” *History* 84, no. 274 (April 1999): 238, 256; Bruce Webster, “Scotland without a King, 1329-1341,” in *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community*, ed. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 223, 225–227, 230; Alasdair Ross, “Men for All Seasons? The Strathbogie Earls of Atholl and the Wars of Independence, c.1290-c.1335: Part 1,” *Northern Scotland* 20 (2000): 17; Alasdair Ross, “Men for All Seasons? The Strathbogie Earls of Atholl and the Wars of Independence, c.1290-c.1335: Part 2,” *Northern Scotland* 21 (2001): 4; Alastair J. Macdonald, “The Kingdom of Scotland at War, 1332-1488,” in *A Military History of Scotland*, ed. Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang, and Matthew J. Strickland (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 158, 160.

<sup>11</sup> John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. A.A.M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), 88n; Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica, 1272-1363*, ed. Andy King (Woodbridge: Surtees Society, 2005), 52–53; Harry Rothwell, ed., *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1957), 367; Joseph Bain, ed., *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1881-1888), 2:495 (no. 1851); Francis Palgrave, ed., *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland* (London, 1837), 358; *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in domo capitulari Westmonasteriensi asservati* (London, 1814-1819), 1:85. See: Cynthia J. Neville, “Widows of War: Edward I and the Women of Scotland during the War of Independence,” in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 121, 123–124, 126; Lucinda Dean, “Projecting Dynastic Majesty: State Ceremony in the Reign of Robert the Bruce,” *International Review of Scottish Studies* 40 (2015): 4, 36, 38; R. James Goldstein, “The Women of the Wars of Independence in Literature and History,” *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26, no. 1 (1991): 278;

Elizabeth de Burgh and daughter Marjorie were held in more comfortable surroundings.<sup>12</sup> Rebecca Boorsma and Inge Milfull have considered the role played by women in John Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace*, while Neville and R. James Goldstein have examined the loss of land, income, and freedom by women affected by the wars.<sup>13</sup> The impact of warfare on women was alluded to in 1320 in the Declaration of Arbroath, which used the stock motif of female suffering to criticise Edward I as "sparing neither age nor sex, religion nor rank."<sup>14</sup> Neville has pointed out that Edward, and by implication his successors Edward II and Edward III, were able to rationalise their harsh treatment of women since those acting against their overlordship were seen by them as rebellious vassals, not legitimate enemies who should have been treated according to the conventions of warfare.<sup>15</sup>

There is, furthermore, archaeological evidence for the involvement of, and effects on, women during wartime, offering an alternative viewpoint to that of written sources. Excavations at Stirling Castle in 1997-1998 uncovered a chapel on the site, the earliest written evidence for which is from the early twelfth century. Of the nine skeletons excavated from the chapel, five exhibited evidence of perimortem blunt force trauma and, of those five, four were found through radiocarbon dating to have lived in or around the years of the Wars of Independence. One skeleton was identified as female, aged 26 to 45 years old, and having died in 1295±35. Around the time of death, she sustained two rectangular injuries with clearly defined edges to the top of her cranium, as well as a series of linear fractures on the right side of her cranium, probably caused by two blows to the head. The rectangular shape of the lesions suggests the use of a weapon such as a war hammer, poleaxe, or the guard of a sword, while their orientation suggests that the attacker was positioned above the woman. It is significant that the female skeleton shows signs of perimortem trauma consistent with battle or siege warfare. The orderly spacing and positioning of the skeletal remains suggests that they were well marked above ground, and the chapel itself may have formed part of royal lodgings within the castle, suggesting that this woman was of high status. The rarity of burial within castle chapels, and the radiocarbon dates of the skeletons, make it possible that several of the excavated individuals sustained their injuries during siege-related events between the late thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries, adding an entirely new dimension to our understanding of women's roles in the Wars of Independence.<sup>16</sup> While this archaeological evidence does not necessarily support the view that the above woman engaged actively in warfare, it does demonstrate that she was considered a legitimate target of physical violence in

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and Nicola Royan, "Some Conspicuous Women in the *Original Chronicle*, *Scotichronicon* and *Scotorum Historia*," *The Innes Review* 59, no. 2 (2008): 132–133.

<sup>12</sup> Neville, "Widows of War," 123–126.

<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Boorsma, "Women of Independence in Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace*," in *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland, 1000-1600*, ed. Edward J. Cowan and Lizanne Henderson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 169–184; Inge B. Milfull, "War and Truce: Women in *The Wallace*," in *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing*, ed. Sarah M. Dunnigan, C. Marie Harker, and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 19–30; Neville, "Widows of War," 109–139; Goldstein, "The Women of the Wars of Independence in Literature and History," 271–282.

<sup>14</sup> Transcription and Translation of the Declaration of Arbroath, 6 April 1320, National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, SP 13/7.

<sup>15</sup> Neville, "Widows of War," 111.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon Ewart and Dennis Gallagher, *With Thy Towers High: The Archaeology of Stirling Castle and Palace* (Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 2015), 27–28, 31–34, 41, 48, 50–55.

a military context.

The treatment of the Stirling woman can be linked to the perceived suitability of women as targets for those besieging castles. In the Second War of Independence there was a concentration of noblewomen playing significant roles in defending castles. In 1333, Lady Seton defended Berwick alongside her husband Sir Alexander Seton, the captain of Berwick, and Patrick Dunbar, 8th Earl of Dunbar. A pro-Bruce force attempted to relieve the defenders but was heavily defeated in battle at nearby Halidon Hill. Edward III threatened to execute the Setons' son Thomas if they did not surrender the town, but chroniclers recorded how Lady Seton convinced her husband not to give in to this threat. Ultimately their son was killed, and the town was forced to surrender.<sup>17</sup> In 1336, after his victory at Culblean, Murray went on to besiege Strathbogie's widow Katherine Beaumont at Lochindorb Castle until she was relieved by Edward III.<sup>18</sup> "Black Agnes" Randolph, Countess of Dunbar, held the castle of Dunbar against William Montagu, Earl of Salisbury, for five months in 1338. She is recorded as having successfully fought off Montagu's bombardment with her own missiles and some entertaining wordplay.<sup>19</sup> While such a concentration of women engaged in sieges may appear unusual, their high status meant that these women were preferred as defenders to more lowly born men. Women's adoption of positions of command was, it has been argued, considered less threatening to male dominated power structures when it was viewed as temporary and contingent on uncontrollable events.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, as members of the aristocratic class they were natural leaders with the required managerial and organisational skills, transferable from the household to the martial sphere.

## Household Management and Defence

Noblewomen exemplified and married together the seemingly contradictory medieval

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<sup>17</sup> F.J. Amours, ed., *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Text Society, 1903-1914), 6:8–11 (lines 3673–3696, 3879–3902). See: Elizabeth Ewan, "The Dangers of Manly Women: Late Medieval Perceptions of Female Heroism in Scotland's Second War of Independence," in *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing*, ed. Sarah M. Dunnigan, C. Marie Harker, and Evelyn S. Newlyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3–8, 10–15; Royan, "Some Conspicuous Women," 134–136, 139; Ranald Nicholson, "The Siege of Berwick, 1333," *The Scottish Historical Review* 40, no. 129 (April 1961): 31.

<sup>18</sup> John of Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. William F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1872), 352; Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:74, 76, 78 (lines 4557–4623; Wemyss MS); 75, 77, 79 (lines 4585–4827; MS Cott.); Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D.E.R. Watt (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989-1998), 7:119; Iain A. MacInnes, "'To subject the north of the country to his rule': Edward III and the 'Lochindorb Chevauchée' of 1336," *Northern Scotland* 3 (2012): 17–20, 22–23; G.W.S. Barrow, "The Wood of Stronkalter: A Note on the Relief of Lochindorb Castle by Edward III in 1336," *Scottish Historical Review* 46 (1967): 77; MacInnes, *Scotland's Second War of Independence*, 26, 107; Michael Brown, *Scottish Baronial Castles, 1250-1450* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009), 29.

<sup>19</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:80–89, 169 (lines 4651–4766, 4855–4968); Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:126–131; Felix J.H. Skene, ed., *Liber Pluscardensis* (Edinburgh, 1877), 1:284–286, 2:216–217; Herbert Maxwell, trans., *The Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272-1346* (Glasgow: Grimsay Press, 2010), 313–315. See: Ewan, "The Dangers of Manly Women," 3–11, 13–14; Royan, "Some Conspicuous Women," 137–139; Susan Bennett, Mary Byatt, Jenny Main, Anne Oliver, and Janet Trythall, ed., *Women of Moray* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2012), 26–28; Brown, *Scottish Baronial Castles*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> David J. Hay, *The Military Leadership of Matilda of Canossa, 1046-1115* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 11; McLoughlin, "The Woman Warrior," 196–197.

ideals of skill in warfare and domesticity. They inhabited and controlled the domestic sphere, providing food and shelter, acting as hosts, and supervising their servants. In management of the household economy and the wider estate, aristocratic women exercised considerable control over administration, expenses, and household and staff maintenance.<sup>21</sup> Christine de Pizan, in a conduct manual of 1405, noted that, “these women spend much of their lives in households without husbands. The men usually are at court or in distant countries. So the ladies will have the responsibilities for managing their property, their revenues, and their lands.”<sup>22</sup> Alongside women’s fiscal, administrative, agricultural, commercial, and overall managerial responsibilities, Christine outlined those relating to war and defence:

She must know the laws of arms and all things pertaining to warfare, ever prepared to command her men if there is need of it. She has to know both assault and defence tactics to ensure that her fortresses are well defended, if she has any expectation of attack or believes she must initiate military action. Testing her men, she will discover their qualities of courage and determination before overly trusting them. She must know the number and strength of her men to gauge accurately her resources, so that she never will have to trust vain or feeble promises. Calculating what force she is capable of providing before her lord arrives with reinforcements, she also must know the financial resources she could call upon to sustain military action.<sup>23</sup>

Evidently, noblewomen were expected to participate actively in warfare, specifically defence, through the formulation of strategy and the proper deployment of both human and monetary resources.<sup>24</sup> As members of the aristocratic class, the defining function of which was to wage war, their social status was inextricably connected to martial deeds. In the traditional tripartite division of society—those who work, those who pray, and those who fight—the *bellatores* were defined by their martial duty.<sup>25</sup> Christine’s works were among the earliest written both by a woman and for women. Earlier advice literature for women included Louis IX of France’s *Instructions* to his daughter Isabelle, written in c.1267, and Durand de Champagne’s *Speculum dominarum*, written in c.1300 for Jeanne de Navarre, Queen of France and Navarre. These were more spiritually focussed, concerned with moral behaviour, justice, and ethics.<sup>26</sup> Robert

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<sup>21</sup> Boorsma, “Women of Independence in Barbour’s *Bruce* and Blind Harry’s *Wallace*,” 177; Silvana Vecchio, “The Good Wife,” in *A History of Women in the West*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992-1994), 2:125–126; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “Including Women,” in *A History of Women in the West*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992-4), 2:3–4; Joanna H. Drell, “Aristocratic Economies: Women and Family,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 329, 337–338; David Herlihy, “Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701-1200,” *Traditio* 18 (1962): 102; Rowena E. Archer, “How ladies ... who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates: Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society, c.1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), 150–159, 170–173.

<sup>22</sup> Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, trans. Charity Cannon Willard, ed. Madeline Pelter Cosman (New York: Bard Hall Press, 1989), 170–171 (emphasis Cosman’s).

<sup>23</sup> De Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 169–170 (emphasis Cosman’s).

<sup>24</sup> For examples of women defending, and attacking, castles and towns, see: Verbruggen, “Women in Medieval Armies,” 124–130; and Truax, “Anglo-Norman Women at War,” 114–118, 120–122.

<sup>25</sup> Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 143, 151–153, 177, 239.

<sup>26</sup> See: David O’Connell, ed., *The Instructions of Saint Louis: A Critical Text* (Chapel Hill, NC: Department of

Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln's *Rules*, written in the mid-thirteenth century for Margaret, Dowager Countess of Lincoln, primarily advised on the proper management of her large household and estates.<sup>27</sup> None of these works referred to the military and defensive aspects of an aristocratic woman's responsibilities. It seems that, before the emergence of prominent female writers, the defence of castles by women was an expected and, in times of extended warfare, ordinary behaviour, but not one evident in advice literature. In Scotland, this is demonstrated by the actions of Lady Seton, Christina Bruce, Katherine Beaumont, and Black Agnes in the 1330s.

Women's martial role was linked to their responsibility to look after the home and the wider estate. Elizabeth Ewan, in her discussion of Black Agnes's defence of Dunbar, pointed out that medieval historians made Agnes's actions more acceptable by associating her defence with the upkeep of home and family. For example, when Montagu's catapult stones damaged the castle wall, Agnes is said to have sent one of her women with a towel to wipe the dust from the places that the stones had struck, thus maintaining the 'cleanliness' of her residence.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis placed by Wyntoun and Walter Bower on Agnes's femininity in this anecdote fits in to their accounts of the siege as a whole, in that Montagu's ineffectiveness as an attacker was made all the more glaring through juxtaposition with Agnes's feminine role as household manager.

### Christina and Kildrummy Castle

Before turning to the siege of Kildrummy, it is necessary to provide some background on Christina's life and wartime experiences. She was born by 1293, the daughter of Marjory, Countess of Carrick, and Robert Bruce, 6th Lord of Annandale. Her siblings included Robert I, Edward, claimant to the kingdom of Ireland, Isabella, Queen of Norway, and Mary. By 1305 she had married Sir Christopher Seton. The following year, after Robert I's coronation and subsequent defeat at Methven, the King and his family separated and went into hiding. Seton and other prominent Bruce supporters were executed. Christina escaped with Robert's wife Elizabeth, his daughter Marjorie, their sister Mary, and Isabella, Countess of Buchan to Kildrummy, which was besieged by Edward, Prince of Wales. The party escaped again, to Tain in the far north of mainland Scotland, where they were captured by William, 3rd Earl of Ross, and sent into English captivity.<sup>29</sup> Christina was imprisoned for eight years at Sixhills nunnery in Lincolnshire, where she was allowed a modest three pence per day for her maintenance.<sup>30</sup> Only

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Romance Languages, UNC, 1979), 78–85; Constant J. Mews, "The *Speculum dominarum* (*Miroir des dames*) and Transformations of the Literature of Instruction for Women in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *Virtue Ethics for Women, 1250-1500*, ed. K. Green and C.J. Mews (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 13–30; Rina Lahav, "A Mirror of Queenship: The *Speculum dominarum* and the Demands of Justice," in *Virtue Ethics for Women, 1250-1500*, ed. K. Green and C.J. Mews (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 31–44.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Lamond, ed., *Walter of Henley's "Husbandry" together with an anonymous "Husbandry," "Seneschaucie" and Robert Grosseteste's "Rules"* (London, 1890), 121–145.

<sup>28</sup> Ewan, "The Dangers of Manly Women," 6, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, 334–335; Barbour, *The Bruce*, 128–129 (lines 331–345), 152–161 (lines 39–56, 59–186, 155–161); Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 6:323; Skene, *Liber Pluscardensis*, 1:231–232, 2:177; Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, 358–359; Rothwell, *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, 369; Gray, *Scalacronica*, 52–55.

<sup>30</sup> Palgrave, *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, 359 (no. 155); *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in*

with Robert's victory at Bannockburn in 1314 did he gain the necessary leverage to achieve the release of his family and supporters.<sup>31</sup> Christina was sent to York in July, then to Carlisle Castle in October, before going onwards to Scotland.<sup>32</sup> Some years later, in 1324, she founded a chapel near Dumfries—presumably the site of Seton's execution—at which masses were to be said for him.<sup>33</sup>

At an unknown date Robert granted Christina lordship for life of the Garioch in Aberdeenshire, to the east of Kildrummy.<sup>34</sup> This was a contested lordship, a third of which the Bruces had inherited from David, Earl of Huntingdon, the other two thirds going to the Balliols and the Hastings.<sup>35</sup> Christina was active in exercising lordship: in 1323 she granted the office of forester of the Garioch to William de Makhaun and his wife Katherine de Fiwy.<sup>36</sup> In 1326 she married Andrew Murray, after which the lordship was re-granted to them both to be held by them and their heirs.<sup>37</sup> Growing Bruce control in the north-east had earlier been facilitated in c.1290 by Robert's first marriage to Isabella, daughter of Donald, 6th Earl of Mar, to which title the Comyns also had a claim.<sup>38</sup> Robert was uncle twice over to Donald, 8th Earl of Mar, both through his wife and because Donald's mother was an unidentified sister of Robert's. Robert's position as uncle and guardian of Donald meant that Kildrummy, caput of the earldom, was in his keepership.<sup>39</sup> By 1335 it was evidently deemed natural that Christina should continue in that role on behalf of Donald's son, and her own great-nephew, Thomas, the 9th Earl, who was a minor.

It is unclear, however, when exactly Christina gained possession of Kildrummy. After Donald's death in 1332 the castle appears to have fallen into Balliol hands. In February 1334 Edward Balliol granted it to Richard Talbot, whom he named Lord of Mar, and who was married to Elizabeth Comyn, a sister of John Comyn of Badenoch.<sup>40</sup> Alastair Ross has argued

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*the Public Record Office, Edward II* (London, 1892-1895), 1:14; *Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward I* (London, 1893-1898), 3:503; Rothwell, *The Chronicle of Walter of Guisborough*, 369; Bain, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, 2:495, 508 (no. 1851, 1910), 3:5 (no. 27). Gwladus, daughter of Dafydd ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales, was also imprisoned there from 1283 to 1328. See: J.B. Smith, "Dafydd ap Gruffudd (d.1283)," *ODNB*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/7324.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Rymer, ed., *Fœdera, Conventiones, Litteræ, et cujuscunque generis Acta Publica inter Reges Angliæ* (London, 1816-1869), 2:251; Maxwell, *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, 211; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 6:353.

<sup>32</sup> Bain, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, 3:71, 74, (no. 371, 393); *Calendar of the Close Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward II*, 2:108-109; Rymer, *Fœdera*, 2:251.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce Webster, G.W.S. Barrow, A.A.M. Duncan, Cynthia J. Neville, and Grant Simpson, ed., *Regesta Regum Scottorum* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960-1988), 5:525-256 (no. 262).

<sup>34</sup> Webster et. al., *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, 5:648, (no. 405).

<sup>35</sup> Geoffrey W.S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), 43.

<sup>36</sup> *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie preserved at Alloa House, N.B.* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904), 6.

<sup>37</sup> Webster et. al., *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, 5:563 (no. Ra70); Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:34-35; Skene, *Liber Pluscardensis*, 1:256, 2:190.

<sup>38</sup> Katy Jack, "Decline and Fall: The Earls and Earldom of Mar, c.1281-1513," (PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2016), 92; G.W.S. Barrow, "Robert I [Robert Bruce] (1274-1329)," *ODNB*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/3754. Robert's marriage to Isabella also made Christina great-aunt to David Strathbogie, since the latter's grandmother Marjorie was Isabella's sister.

<sup>39</sup> Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 142; Barrow, "Robert I [Robert Bruce]."

<sup>40</sup> Scott L. Waugh, "Talbot, Richard, second lord Talbot (c.1306-1356)," *ODNB*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/26938.

that it is likely that, after Talbot was captured in September 1334, Kildrummy was handed over to the Bruce faction.<sup>41</sup> Mar had been the subject of infighting between Balliol and rival claimants Strathbogie, Talbot, and Alexander Mowbray, the latter married to an Isabella of Mar.<sup>42</sup> Between September 1334 and August 1335, Strathbogie, as grandson of Sir John Comyn of Badenoch, whom Bruce had killed in 1306 and was father of the above John, seems to have taken forcible possession of all Comyn lands, perhaps including Kildrummy.<sup>43</sup> During this same period, Strathbogie was in the Bruce allegiance and presumably handed the castle over in that time, thus enabling Christina's keepership by September 1335.<sup>44</sup> By this point, as recorded by Wyntoun, only five fortifications remained in Bruce hands. These were Dumbarton, Loch Leven, Urquhart, Loch Doon, and Kildrummy:

The third castle was Kildrummy,  
Dame Christian the Bruce boldly  
Held with knights and squires,  
[That] hurt their foes in many ways.<sup>45</sup>

An alternative version reads:

The third castle was Kildrummy,  
That Dame Christian the Bruce boldly  
Held with knights and squires,  
That cleared the boundaries of antagonists.<sup>46</sup>

Christina held the castle by September, at which point Murray became guardian of Scotland for a second time. Strathbogie, again allied to Balliol and appointed as his guardian of Scotland north of the Forth, laid siege to the castle at the head of a Disinherited force. As well as a claim to Mar, he sought to regain his lordships of Strathbogie and Badenoch and the Earldom of Atholl, all of which bordered Mar.<sup>47</sup>

### The Chronicle Sources

The two versions of Wyntoun's work quoted above recorded that Christina's knights and squires "[g]reiffit þare fais on seire maneris," or hurt their foes in many ways, and "reddit

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<sup>41</sup> Ross, "Men for All Seasons? Part 2," 11. See also: R.C. Reid, "Edward de Balliol," *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd ser., 35 (1956-1957): 60.

<sup>42</sup> Ross, "Men for All Seasons? Part 2," 6n52; Penman, *David II*, 60.

<sup>43</sup> Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:103.

<sup>44</sup> Ross, "Men for All Seasons? Part 2," 6–7, 10–11.

<sup>45</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:18 (lines 3811–3814; Wemyss MS). "The thrid castell wes Kindromy, / Dame Cristiane þe Brufs stoutly / Held with knychtis and squyeris, / Greiffit þare fais on seire maneris."

<sup>46</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:15, 19 (lines 4015–4018; MS Cott.). "Þe thride castel was Kyldrwm, / Þat Dame Cristiane þe Bruys stoutly / Helde wiþe knychtis and sqwyeris, / Þat reddit about þaim weil þe meris." See also: Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:92–93.

<sup>47</sup> Ross, "Men for All Seasons? Part 2," 6–7; Ross, "Men for All Seasons? Part 1," 13; Penman, *David II*, 60; Jack, "Decline and Fall," 92.

about þaim weil þe meris,” or cleared the boundaries of antagonists. Her men played an active role in defending the castle, on which topic Wyntoun expanded later in his chronicle. His account, unlike all other known accounts, which are fragmentary and minimise Christina’s role, was evidently the most reliable and accurate. It has already been demonstrated that it was ordinary for noblewomen to step in to defensive military roles when circumstances required, and that Christina was politically prominent as a landholder and a member of Scotland’s ruling dynasty. Therefore, Wyntoun’s version of events, outlined in further detail below, demand greater credence than other chronicle sources.

Christina’s defence of Kildrummy, like that of Black Agnes at Dunbar, married the two virtues of domesticity and military proficiency. She successfully cared for and protected the home while displaying the noble attributes of courage, loyalty, perseverance, and martial skill.<sup>48</sup> However, this connection was not made explicit, nor was it exploited to comic effect, in the medieval sources: most chroniclers barely mentioned her at all. Within the English chronicle tradition, accounts of the siege did not discuss Christina’s role whatsoever. In the mid-fourteenth century *Chronicle of Lanercost*, and the late fourteenth century *Anonimalle Chronicle*, Christina was unmentioned, as if Kildrummy was held by no one in particular.<sup>49</sup> *Scalacronica* by Sir Thomas Gray, also written in the mid-fourteenth century, only mentioned the subsequent battle of Culblean, not the siege of Kildrummy, describing Strathbogie as having “fought with Andrew de Moray, ... and with rebellious men of David Bruce’s party.”<sup>50</sup>

It might be expected that chronicles produced in Scotland would demonstrate a greater knowledge of, and appreciation for, the actions of a prominent member of the Bruce family, but this was not necessarily the case. The dominant Scottish narrative derives from John of Fordun’s *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, compiled between the 1360s and the 1380s. It was partially derived from a source of unknown authorship known as *Gesta Annalia* II, which itself was partially derived from a putative ‘St Andrews Chronicle.’<sup>51</sup> Fordun’s position as a chaplain of Aberdeen meant that his focus was largely on the people and events of the north-east.<sup>52</sup> However, his use of *Gesta Annalia* and its origin in St Andrews may go some way to explaining his apparent ignorance of Christina’s defence. In his account Christina was not named, but Murray was noted as having “learnt, from hearsay, that his castle, with his wife, was besieged by the aforesaid Earl [Strathbogie],” so he “made ready, with all haste, to relieve his castle.”<sup>53</sup> Alongside Patrick Dunbar and Sir William Douglas, Murray “came to blows [with Strathbogie] on the 30th of November, in the forest of Kilblen, where they slaughtered the Earl himself, as

<sup>48</sup> Royan, “Some Conspicuous Women,” 142–143; Keen, *Chivalry*, 177.

<sup>49</sup> Maxwell, *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, 294; V.H. Galbraith, ed., *The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1333 to 1381, from a MS written at St Mary’s Abbey, York* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), 5.

<sup>50</sup> Gray, *Scalacronica*, 120–121.

<sup>51</sup> Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 5:xvii; Dauvit Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain: From the Picts to Alexander III*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 215–217; Dauvit Broun, “A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun,” in *Church, Chronicle and Learning in Medieval and Early Renaissance Scotland*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1999), 14, 17–19; W.W. Scott, “The Scottish Annals in Books 5, 8, 9, 10: A Review,” in Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 9:256–259.

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Boardman, “Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland: Robert the Steward, John of Fordun and the ‘Anonymous Chronicle,’” *The Scottish Historical Review* 76, no. 201 (April 1997): 24; D.E.R. Watt, “Fordun, John (d. in or after 1363),” *ODNB*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/9875.

<sup>53</sup> Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, 351–352.

well as five knights and the rest of his partisans.”<sup>54</sup>

Walter Bower, abbot of Inchcolm composed a continuation of Fordun’s work in the 1440s. His *Scoticronicon*, however, is also thought to have incorporated some material from a now lost ‘Anonymous Chronicle,’ covering the period 1324 to 1390 and probably completed around the latter date. He did, however, rely more on *Gesta Annalia*.<sup>55</sup> Bower’s account offered a greater degree of dramatic flair, but lacked any detail on Christina or Kildrummy. He recorded Strathbogie’s destruction of the countryside in the north-east, placing Christina in a position of responsibility regarding the defence of the region from a violent oppressor. Bower stated that

it is impossible to grasp from a brief account how many tyrannical and cruel acts this earl perpetrated against the people. For some he disinherited, some he imprisoned in dungeons, some he even banished and murdered; and in the end he ordered the destruction of all freeholders of the land without fail. But, as it is said in the proverb:

A prize disgracefully won does not bring good results,

because when God was wanting to put an end to his evil deeds, Atholl finally began to besiege the castle of Kildrummy.<sup>56</sup>

The stage was now set for an act of retribution by Christina at Kildrummy, from which she had fled in 1306 and which she now held against a pro-English force after having spent eight years imprisoned in England. However, Bower neglected even to name Christina, and did not mention Kildrummy again until he noted that 300 men from the castle travelled to Culblean to take part in the battle.<sup>57</sup> *Liber Pluscardensis*, a mid-fifteenth century abridgment of *Scoticronicon*, likewise minimised the significance of Kildrummy and Christina.<sup>58</sup> This Fordun-derived narrative strand appears to conform to Nicola Royan’s assertion that, “all histories are selective in the material they record, and often feminine action is cut first.”<sup>59</sup> However, while Strathbogie’s destruction of north-east Scotland was noted by chroniclers, he was not criticised for besieging a woman, suggesting that it was plausible for women to defend castles.

Of the medieval chroniclers, only Wyntoun provided any significant detail on Christina’s role in the siege. His *Original Chronicle* was written for Sir John Wemyss and completed in the 1420s while he was prior of St Serp’s at Loch Leven. In it he took an entirely different approach to Christina’s defence. Like Bower, he is believed to have used the Anonymous Chronicle for material on events during the reign of David II, but seems to have relied on it more heavily.<sup>60</sup> It is thought that the Anonymous Chronicler had access to the aforementioned St Andrews Chronicle, from which a compiler of *Gesta Annalia* also drew

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<sup>54</sup> Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, 352.

<sup>55</sup> Boardman, “Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland,” 25.

<sup>56</sup> Bower, *Scoticronicon*, 7:115, 117.

<sup>57</sup> Bower, *Scoticronicon*, 7:117.

<sup>58</sup> Skene, *Liber Pluscardensis*, 1:279–280, 2:211–212.

<sup>59</sup> Royan, “Some Conspicuous Women,” 132.

<sup>60</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 1:xc–cii; Broun, “A New Look at *Gesta Annalia*,” 14; Boardman, “Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland,” 25.

material, suggesting that they were based in St Andrews between 1363 and 1390.<sup>61</sup> During their careers both Wyntoun and Bower were canons of St Andrews, giving them access to the Anonymous Chronicle as a source.<sup>62</sup> However, it has been argued that the existence of such a source is in fact questionable and that Wyntoun introduced it as an intermediary text to lend authority and trustworthiness to his discussion of events within the relatively recent past. This is supported by the lack of detail offered by either Wyntoun or Bower regarding the authorship and origin of the source, and the continuation of Wyntoun's narrative after 1390 without introducing another source, despite his earlier statement that the Anonymous Chronicle ended with the death of Robert II.<sup>63</sup>

The Christina depicted by Wyntoun had a much greater degree of agency than that of Fordun and Bower. During the siege she “maid stout and manly resistens” against Strathbogie, whose “great company” was chased outwith the castle:

Now we go to Earl David,  
That assembled about him a great company,  
And arrayed roughly over all the land  
Sometimes, men said, with three thousand;  
And so to besiege Kildrummy  
He boldly made haste with his men.  
There Dame Christian Bruce within,  
That thought to prevent him in to win,  
Made bold and manly resistance,  
And strongly organised her defence,  
And more often chased them without  
Than they did to those within, without doubt.<sup>64</sup>

The language used by Wyntoun is important. It was shown earlier how Christina's knights and squires cleared the boundaries of antagonists, most likely by shooting arrows or other missiles at Strathbogie's troops to deter them from storming the castle.<sup>65</sup> Christina would have made good use of the shield-shaped plan, high curtain walls with tall towers at the corners, and the well-protected double-towered gatehouse of Kildrummy, all of which allowed archers overlapping fields of fire and the whole of which still backs on to a steep burn at the rear.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:xvii; Broun, “A New Look at *Gesta Annalia*,” 15, 18, 21; Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, 217; Boardman, “Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland,” 25.

<sup>62</sup> Broun, “A New Look at *Gesta Annalia*,” 19; C. Edington, “Wyntoun, Andrew (c.1350-c.1422),” ODNB, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/30164; D.E.R. Watt, “Bower [Bowmaker], Walter (1385-1449),” ODNB, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/3045.

<sup>63</sup> Anne Rutten, personal communication; Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 5:368 (Wemyss MS), 369 (MS Cott.).

<sup>64</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:58, 60 (lines 4357–4368; Wemyss MS). “Now ga we to þe Erll Davy, / That semblit till him gret cumpany, / And raid rudely oure all þe land / Sum quhile, men said, with thre thousand; / And sa till assege Kindrummy / He schupe him with his men stoutly. / Thare Dame Cristiane þe Brufs wiþin, / That thocht to lat him in to wyn, / Maid stout and manly resistens, / And wichtly set for hir defens, / And oftare chasit þaim without / Than þai did þaim within, but dout.” See also: 59, 61 (lines 4563–4574; MS Cott.).

<sup>65</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:19 (line 4018; MS Cott.).

<sup>66</sup> Brown, *Scottish Baronial Castles*, 19–21; Historic Environment Scotland, *Statement of Significance, Kildrummy Castle*

The phrase “often chased them without” furthermore suggests active skirmishing outside the castle walls. The lines “maid stout and manly resistens / And wichtly [strongly] set for hir defens” are particularly significant, portraying her as brave, bold, and as capable as a man. However, Christina’s womanhood was not exploited by Wyntoun in order to emasculate Strathbogie, as in accounts of Black Agnes at Dunbar, suggesting that he did not exaggerate her role for narrative effect. Christina was demonstrably personally responsible for, and in control of, the castle’s defence strategy, linking to Christine de Pizan’s instruction that a noblewoman should know “defence tactics to ensure that her fortresses are well defended” and be “ever prepared to command her men if there is need of it.”<sup>67</sup>

The divergence in the narratives of Wyntoun and Bower concerning Christina’s actions may be associated with their use of different sources. Both are said to have made use of the Anonymous Chronicle associated with St Andrews, which Steve Boardman has demonstrated drew its principal source material from eyewitness and family accounts of laypeople south of the Forth.<sup>68</sup> However, Wyntoun was writing in the vernacular for a secular audience and so was interested in chivalric deeds, whereas Bower was writing in Latin for a clerical audience and so was more concerned with moralising tales.<sup>69</sup> As mentioned above, Wyntoun is said to have relied more on the Anonymous Chronicle while Bower preferred to use *Gesta Annalia* for the period up to 1363. Aside from source usage, Bower’s writing can be argued to have been particularly misogynist, rendering him susceptible to ignoring Christina’s noteworthy actions. His treatment of Black Agnes, who he framed as a pugnacious housewife, and his failure to identify Lady Seton, whose name may have been Christian Cheyne, suggest that he was uncomfortable with the idea of women as legitimate protagonists in war.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, Wyntoun may have had access to additional source material that Bower did not have. Potential sources include family histories passed down, orally or in writing, through the wider Bruce or Murray families. It has been shown that medieval women could play a significant role in preserving their families’ histories, perpetuating women’s deeds through eye-witness accounts and the ballad or oral tradition.<sup>71</sup> However, Christina had no known direct descendants who could carry on the story of her achievement in defending Kildrummy. Although it has been stated elsewhere that Christina was the mother of Murray’s children, their mother was in fact his first wife, whose identity is unknown. Christina’s childlessness is further suggested by the granting of the Garioch after her death to Thomas, 9th Earl of Mar, not to Christina and Murray’s heirs, as stipulated in the original grant of the lordship.<sup>72</sup> Wyntoun himself may have had a familial link to Kildrummy since an “Ingrame of

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(Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, forthcoming, 2020).

<sup>67</sup> De Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor*, 169.

<sup>68</sup> Boardman, “Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland,” 26–28.

<sup>69</sup> Boardman, “Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland,” 27.

<sup>70</sup> John Balfour Paul, ed., *The Scots Peerage* (Edinburgh, 1904-1914), 8:568; Richard Maitland of Lethington, *The History of the House of Seytoun* (Glasgow, 1829), 23.

<sup>71</sup> Ewan, “The Dangers of Manly Women,” 5; Ulrike Hogg and Martin MacGregor, “Historiography in Highlands and Lowlands,” in *The International Companion to Scottish Literature, 1400-1650*, ed. Nicola Royan (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2018), 102, 104.

<sup>72</sup> Christina’s motherhood of Murray’s children is stated in Penman, *David II*, 111, 121, 143, 159–160, 202, 270. For evidence to the contrary, see: Paul, *The Scots Peerage*, 2:128; John Maitland Thomson, ed., *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum* (Edinburgh, 1882-1914), 6:204 (no. 167).

Wyntone” was a keeper of the castle in 1361, and Ingrame may have heard word of Christina’s defence that was then passed down to the chronicler.<sup>73</sup> There was also a familial relationship between Sir John Wemyss, Wyntoun’s patron, and the Erksine Earls of Mar, presenting another possible connection between Wyntoun and Christina through Mar.<sup>74</sup> Her story may, then, have been passed not through her own family but through that of Wyntoun or Wemyss.

Christina’s defence is particularly impressive considering that both Wyntoun and Bower recorded Strathbogie’s force as numbering 3,000 men, with *Liber Pluscardensis* inflating the figure to 5,000, relating how this number of his men were killed at Culblean, suggesting their presence at the siege of Kildrummy immediately before.<sup>75</sup> While the chroniclers may have exaggerated these numbers to lend greater distinction to Murray’s victory, it would be expected that Strathbogie had a sizeable force with which to carry out his various tyrannical acts throughout the north-east. Christina had as few as 300 men, who were recorded as travelling to the battlefield, about thirty kilometres south of Kildrummy, to aid Murray and his allies.<sup>76</sup> Wyntoun recorded these men as being led from Kildrummy to Culblean by a John Craig.<sup>77</sup> Sixteenth century historians Hector Boece and George Buchanan interpreted this as meaning that Craig was the captain of the castle: Boece called Craig “p[ræ]fectus castelli Kildrum[m]e” or “captain of the castle of Kildrummy,” while Buchanan named him “arcis præfecto” or “captain of the stronghold,” both suggesting that it was Craig rather than Christina who was responsible for Kildrummy’s defence.<sup>78</sup> Thus, by the sixteenth century, Christina had dropped into historical obscurity. However, Wyntoun never named Craig as captain of the castle—as inferred by W. Douglas Simpson and Nicholson—but only described him as having led the men between the two locations.<sup>79</sup> Both Bower and the Pluscarden chronicler situated Craig at Culblean but did not name him as either captain or defender of the castle.<sup>80</sup> Fordun made no mention of Craig whatsoever. Of the extant chronicles, Wyntoun’s expressed the most in-depth knowledge of the siege, strongly supporting the argument that Christina was ultimately responsible for its defence. If Craig was captain, it was under Christina’s command.

## Impact

Christina’s ability to withhold Strathbogie had significant consequences for the immediate progression of the war. Murray travelled from Bathgate in Lothian to relieve her,

<sup>73</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:251 (line 7155; MS Cott.).

<sup>74</sup> Duncan Wemyss of Rires married Elizabeth, a daughter of Sir Thomas Erskine (d. 1403x4). See: William Fraser, *Memorials of the Family of Wemyss of Wemyss* (Edinburgh, 1888), 1:54; Jack, “Decline and Fall,” 267; Simpson, “The Campaign and Battle of Culblean,” 208n3.

<sup>75</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:58 (line 4360, Wemyss MS), 59 (line 4566; MS Cott.); Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:116–117; Skene, *Liber Pluscardensis*, 1:280, 2:212.

<sup>76</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:64 (lines 4425–4426; Wemyss MS), 65 (lines 4631–4632; MS Cott.); Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:116–117.

<sup>77</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:64 (line 4430; Wemyss MS), 65 (line 4636; MS Cott.).

<sup>78</sup> Hector Boece, *Scotorum Historiae a Prima Gentis Origine* (Paris, 1527), fol. 331v (lines 63–64); Edith C. Batho and H. Winifred Husbards, ed., *The Chronicles of Scotland compiled by Hector Boece, translated into Scots by John Bellenden, 1531* (Edinburgh, 1941), 2:315; George Buchanan, *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1583), fol. 87v (lines 41–42).

<sup>79</sup> Simpson, “The Campaign and Battle of Culblean,” 202, 206, 210–211; Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, 233.

<sup>80</sup> Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:116–117; Skene, *Liber Pluscardensis*, 1:280, 2:212.

moving quickly with 800 mounted knights: “the flower of the south half of the Scottish sea” (i.e., the Forth).<sup>81</sup> Strathbogie’s defeat and death at Culblean on 30 November 1335 was a pivotal event. A truce had been agreed on 29 September and extended on 8 November, though this applied only to English-held southern Scotland, not the north-eastern region in which Kildrummy lies.<sup>82</sup> Murray suspended negotiations to travel north and relieve Christina, receiving safe conducts for himself and his men from the English chancery.<sup>83</sup> This concession led Ross to argue that Strathbogie’s defeat was the result of a temporary alliance between Murray, Edward III, and Edward Balliol, intended to isolate Strathbogie.<sup>84</sup> As a descendant of John Comyn, Strathbogie may have seen himself as the natural leader of the Scottish political community, over and above the ineffective Balliol, who was unable to appease the Disinherited nobles in his allegiance or to succeed militarily without English aid.<sup>85</sup> Murray, meanwhile, was able to seize the initiative gained by the removal of Strathbogie, a powerful pro-Balliol leader, and co-ordinate an effective response to the Disinherited war effort. This included a siege through the winter of 1335-1336 and summer of 1336 on Lochindorb Castle, held by Strathbogie’s widow Katherine Beaumont. His successful campaign necessitated the extension of the truce until 12 May 1336 and a temporary cessation of the siege.<sup>86</sup> While Murray is credited by historians with bringing about this change in Bruce fortunes—Culblean has been called “a morale-boosting triumph for the Bruce cause”—at least part of the credit should go to Christina.<sup>87</sup> Her contribution has been largely ignored by historians including Nicholson, who recognised that had Culblean been a defeat for the Bruce faction they would have been forced to submit to Edward III, but he devoted barely a few lines to Christina and the siege of Kildrummy, minimising her role.<sup>88</sup>

In the years following the siege, evidence for Christina’s life and actions are patchy, but they do give a sense of continuing prominence and influence. In 1334-1335 she had been granted the lands of “Petekleth” or “Peteclache” at Falkland in Fife.<sup>89</sup> This added to her existing lands of the Garioch, lordship over which she continued to exercise: in 1346 she issued a charter granting to a Patrick Abernethy and his heirs the lands of “Burty” within the

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<sup>81</sup> Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:62 (lines 4412–4413; Wemyss MS): “the floure of þe South half þe Scottis se.” See also: Amours, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, 6:63 (lines 4618–4619; MS Cott.); Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:116–117. My thanks to Dr Iain MacInnes for clarifying the meaning of this number. W. Douglas Simpson argued that Murray’s total force would have numbered as many as 4,000, including ordinary soldiers: Simpson, “The Campaign and Battle of Culblean,” 205.

<sup>82</sup> Rymer, *Fadera*, 2:925. See MacInnes, *Scotland’s Second War of Independence*, 23, 106–107; Ross, “Men for All Seasons? Part 2,” 11; Iain MacInnes, “Scotland at War: Its Conduct and the Behaviour of Scottish Soldiers, 1332-1357” (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2008), 29; Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, 230.

<sup>83</sup> Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, 351; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7:116–117; *Rotuli Scotiæ*, 1:385–388.

<sup>84</sup> Ross, “Men for All Seasons? Part 2,” 11–12.

<sup>85</sup> Ross, “Men for All Seasons? Part 2,” 12.

<sup>86</sup> Rymer, *Fadera*, 2:933, dated 18 March 1336. See: MacInnes, “Edward III and the ‘Lochindorb Chevauchée’ of 1336,” 17; MacInnes, *Scotland’s Second War of Independence*, 24–25; MacInnes, “Scotland at War,” 30–31; Penman, *David II*, 63.

<sup>87</sup> Penman, *David II*, 62. See also: MacInnes, *Scotland’s Second War of Independence*, 107; Webster, “Scotland without a King, 1329-1341,” 225–226, 228, 231; MacInnes, “Scotland at War,” 30; Brown, *The Wars of Scotland*, 240–241; A.A.M. Duncan, “Murray [Moray], Sir Andrew, of Bothwell (1298–1338),” *ODNB*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/19590; Brown, *Scottish Baronial Castles*, 28–29.

<sup>88</sup> Nicholson, *Edward III and the Scots*, 230, 235.

<sup>89</sup> Thomson, *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1:572 (no. 889).

lordship.<sup>90</sup> She had some influence in international trade, communicating with her sister Isabella, Dowager Queen of Norway, in 1341 to arrange for a Norwegian merchant to be granted an exemption from customs duties in Aberdeen, from which she herself drew revenue.<sup>91</sup> On David II's return to Scotland in 1341 one of his first stops was Kildrummy, where he issued a charter.<sup>92</sup> He was present again in April, August, and November 1342.<sup>93</sup> In that year Christina was reimbursed for expenses incurred at Kildrummy by Queen Joan, demonstrating that she continued to hold the castle.<sup>94</sup> Thomas, Earl of Mar, reached his majority in 1350/1351 and entered the active service of David II, at which point Christina's keepership of Kildrummy was perhaps no longer required.<sup>95</sup>

Christina died in 1357, the same year in which the Treaty of Berwick ended the Second War of Independence, and was buried at Dunfermline Abbey. Murray had died in 1338 and she is not known to have re-married. In Bower's record of Christina's death, he did not mention her significant contribution to the Second War of Independence:

the Lady Christian de Bruce, the sister of King Robert and wife of the late celebrated Andrew de Moray the Good the guardian of Scotland, died. She was a most noble matron who died at a good age, and was buried at Dunfermline with her parents and ancestors, whose own place of burial it is.<sup>96</sup>

Having considered the treatment of Christina Bruce in both medieval and modern accounts, there is clearly a gap in current scholarship due to a scarcity of contemporary sources and a disregard for women's successful participation in warfare. She was demonstrably perceived as a significant figure by her contemporaries: Edward I and Edward II had her imprisoned for eight years, she was granted land by Robert I and David II, and most notably she played a decisive role in the downfall of Strathbogie by successfully defending Kildrummy. She also acted independently, founding a chapel, granting land, and exerting some influence in international trade. National—and nationalist—narratives tend to focus on distinctly masculine military exploits, excluding women from the formative moments of Scotland's history.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie*, 2.

<sup>91</sup> John Stuart and G. Burnett, ed., *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1878-1908), 1:clxix, 474; Christian Lange, C.R. Unger, H.J. Huitfeldt-Kaas, Gustav Storm, Alexander Bugge, Christopher Brinchmann, and Nils Kolsrud, ed., *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (Christiania and Oslo: P.T. Malling, 1847-2011), 19:560. My thanks to Professor Elizabeth Ewan for drawing my attention to this. See: Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl, "Isabella Bruce, Queen of Norway," in *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan, Rose Pipes, Jane Rendall, and Siân Reynolds (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 215; Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl, "A Well-Adjusted Immigrant: Isabella Bruce, Queen Dowager of Norway, 1299-1358," in *Gender and Mobility in Scotland and Abroad*, ed. Sierra Dye, Elizabeth Ewan, and Alice Glaze (Guelph: Centre for Scottish Studies, 2018), 38-39, 47; Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl, "Friends or Patrons? Powerful Go-Betweens in the Norwegian Realm in the High Middle Ages," in *Friendship and Social Networks in Scandinavia, c.1000-1800*, ed. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Thomas Småberg (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 107.

<sup>92</sup> Webster et al., *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, 6:78 (no. 30).

<sup>93</sup> Webster et al., *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, 6:93, 99-100 (no. 50, 57-58).

<sup>94</sup> Stuart and Burnett, *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, 1:clxii, 512-513.

<sup>95</sup> "Thomas, Ninth Earl of Mar (c.1330-1377)," in Fiona Watson, "Donald, Eighth Earl of Mar (1293-1332)," *ODNB*, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/18021; Penman, *David II*, 160.

<sup>96</sup> Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 7: 304-305. See also: Skene, *Liber Pluscardensis*, 1:302, 2:231.

<sup>97</sup> For critiques of this exclusion, see: Elizabeth Ewan, "A Realm of One's Own? The Place of Medieval and Early

However, Christina's successful defence was recorded in Wyntoun's chronicle, which should be treated as the most reliable of all medieval accounts of the siege. In it she acted with a considerable degree of agency and "maid stout and manly resistens" against Strathbogie. She embodied what are perceived as masculine qualities of courage and martial skill, yet did so in order to fulfil her womanly role as household manager and defender. She rightly earned the title of "Scottish resistance leader" as advocated by Neville.<sup>98</sup> For this reason, she deserves to rank alongside Isabella, Countess of Buchan, Lady Seton, Katherine Beaumont, and Black Agnes as a notable woman of the Wars of Independence.

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Modern Women in Scottish History," in *Gendering Scottish History: An International Approach*, ed. Terry Brotherstone, Deborah Simonton, and Oonagh Walsh (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1999), 27; Carol Edington, "Paragons and Patriots: National Identity and the Chivalric Ideal in Late-Medieval Scotland," in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages*, ed. Dauvit Broun, R.J. Finlay, and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh, John Donald: 1998), 69; Royan, "Some Conspicuous Women," 132.

<sup>98</sup> Neville, "Bruce, Christian," 55.